

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 1600
7 April 1966

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ARMY review(s) completed.

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HIGHLIGHTS

Buddhists and the government claim agreement "in principle" on a future government for South Vietnam, but they apparently differ fundamentally on the composition of a representative assembly. Despite a Buddhist Institute call for a temporary halting of violence, disturbances continued in Saigon and there were reports of Catholic plans for anti-Buddhist actions.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:
US and South Vietnamese marines have terminated amphibious assault/search-and-destroy Operation JACK STAY after 13 days in the Rung Sat Special Zone, southeast of Saigon (Para. 1). US 1st Air Cavalry Division forces are continuing Operation LINCOLN in southern Pleiku and northern Darlac provinces, but without significant contact (Para. 2). B-52 Stratofortresses yesterday attacked Viet Cong target complexes in Phuoc Tuy and Tay Ninh provinces (Para. 3). Prisoner reports indicate personnel from both PAVN and VC units are used in South Vietnam as integrated units (Para. 5).

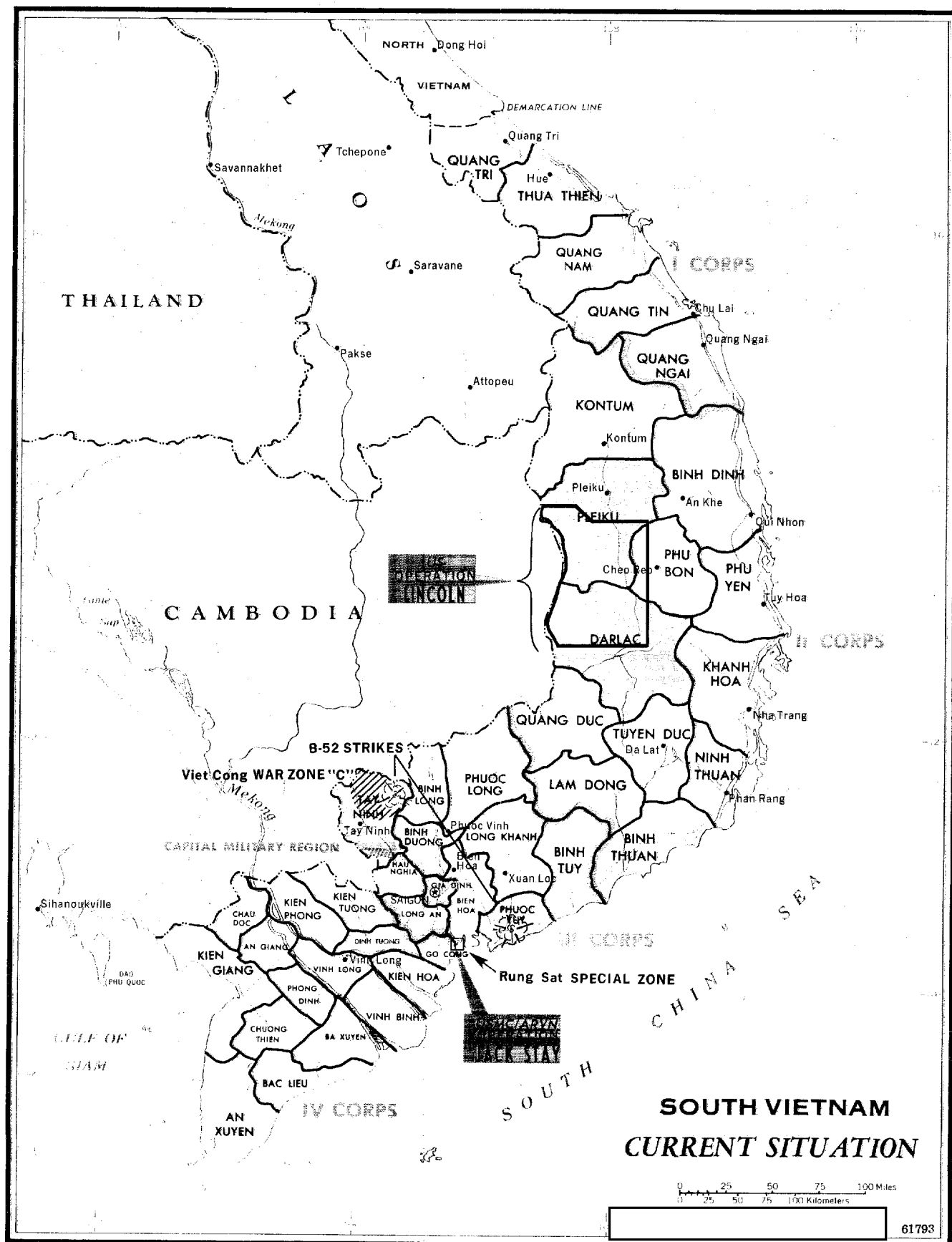
II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:
Buddhist Institute chairman Tam Chau has restated demands for a popularly elected assembly (Para. 1). A Buddhist Institute communiqué called for a temporary halting of all "struggle," but disturbances were continuing in Saigon (Paras. 2-4). Da Nang is calm, although the situation remains fluid (Para. 5). General Khang has provided evidence of strains within the ruling military Directorate (Para. 6). Northern refugee Catholics may be planning massive anti-Buddhist demonstrations in Saigon (Para. 7).

IV. Other Communist Military Developments:
There is nothing of significance to report.

V. Communist Political Developments: In an editorial in the party theoretical journal Hanoi has reaffirmed its opposition to any negotiations other than on the terms of its own "four point" proposal (Para. 1). This reaffirmation may in part have been directed to Peking as evidence of Hanoi's determination to carry on the war and to the Liberation Front to shore up morale in the face of further US troop commitments (Para. 2).

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. US and South Vietnamese Marines have terminated Operation JACK STAY after 13 days in the Rung Sat Special Zone, 28 miles southeast of Saigon. The amphibious assault/ground sweep, initiated on 25 March by one USMC battalion landing team (BLT) near the mouth of the Saigon River to locate and destroy Viet Cong forces harassing vessels transiting the main shipping channel to Saigon, resulted in Communist losses of 63 killed and numerous village facilities and fortifications destroyed. American casualties included five killed, 31 wounded, and two missing. A Vietnamese Marine battalion subsequently committed to the operation sustained no losses. A total of 189 tactical air strikes were flown in support of JACK STAY.

2. US 25th Infantry Division forces have been withdrawn from Operation LINCOLN, currently in its 15th day in southern Pleiku and northern Darlac provinces. Five battalions of the US 1st Air Cavalry Division are continuing the ground offensive, but with no significant contact reported during the past 24 hours.

3. USAF B-52 Stratofortresses yesterday conducted saturation bombing missions against two Viet Cong target complexes within a 45-nautical-mile radius of Saigon. In the first strike, 12 B-52s attacked two suspected multibattalion Viet Cong training camps in Phuoc Tuy Province, 40 nautical miles southeast of Saigon. The second strike involved a continuation of the aerial harassment program against Viet Cong War Zone "C" in Tay Ninh Province, with three B-52s attacking enemy positions 45 nautical miles northwest of Saigon. No ground follow-up operations were planned for either strike; however, psychological warfare leaflets were scheduled for delivery immediately after the Tay Ninh bomb run.

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Viet Cong Activity

4. According to unconfirmed press reports, Viet Cong guerrillas early today machine-gunned 25 chained Vietnamese captives when US-led government troops closed in on a jungle prison some 70 miles southwest of Saigon. Only four of the prisoners, most of whom were civilians, reportedly survived.

Integration of VC/PAVN Units

5. Several Communist prisoners in South Vietnam have provided further information on the mixing of North and South Vietnamese personnel in Viet Cong/PAVN military units. One South Vietnamese captive stated that he was one of 40 South Vietnamese replacements in the 500th Transportation Battalion of the Sao Vang (now known as the 610th Division). A North Vietnamese prisoner --a 15-year-old youth from the 95th Regiment-- stated that at least two battalions of his unit were 50 percent North Vietnamese and 50 percent South Vietnamese. There have been several other reports that the Communists were mixing personnel based on their availability rather than worrying about unit integrity.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Buddhist Institute chairman Tam Chau has stated in Saigon that Buddhist demands still hinge on the creation of a popularly elected assembly. The government's version of this assembly is that it will be composed of 50 percent municipal and provincial council representatives and 50 percent appointees. Despite the exchange of letters and communiqués between the Buddhists and the government expressing agreement "in principle," their positions apparently still differ fundamentally on the composition of an assembly. One major sticking point is probably the number of appointees.

2. Tam Chau also issued a Buddhist Institute communiqué earlier today which called for the temporary cessation of all forms of the "struggle" to allow Premier Ky to confirm publicly verbal agreements made previously with Buddhist leaders. According to the press, the thrust of the Buddhist demand was that Ky fully confirm his promise to yield power to a popularly elected constituent assembly within four to six months. The communiqué also requested amnesty for those involved in the antigovernment movement.

3. Disturbances were continuing in Saigon as of 12:00 p.m. (Vietnam time). According to the press, students retreated into the Unified Buddhist Association headquarters at midnight while riot control forces used tear gas and fired shots over the demonstrators' heads. The Buddhist clerics have prepared a protest of the incident.

4. In addition, US military officials have reported the presence of numerous small bands of hoodlums, which place a burden on security forces. Today in Saigon, a US motorcycle and one jeep were burned. One unknown Caucasian has been abducted by the demonstrators, according to press reports.

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5. The situation remains fluid in Da Nang, although the city was quiet at 11:30 p.m. (Vietnam time). US military officials have reported that elements of the progovernment Vietnamese Air Force may attempt to seize a small Vietnamese Army communications post outside the city sometime tonight.

25X1 [redacted] some of the junior officers in the forces at the airfield are becoming increasingly impatient for action. There was considerable confusion this morning as a red alert was called by an element of the Vietnamese Air Force which precipitated a similar alert among the in-town struggle forces who were braced for an air assault.

6. General Khang, commander of the Capital Military Region, has provided evidence of strains within the military Directorate. He said that several senior officers were disturbed by the government's lack of action against the Da Nang dissidents and by Ky's seeming efforts to accommodate the Buddhists. Khang identified this "hawk" element as himself, General Thieu, Chief of the Joint General Staff Vien, III Corps commander Tri, and IV Corps commander Quang. Lending weight to a growing split in the Directorate is a report from Da Nang that General Co has been at least partially convinced by I Corps commander Chuan that the "struggle movement" has some justification and some chance of succeeding. Co reportedly intends to remain in Da Nang until the marines from Saigon are withdrawn from the air base.

7. General Khang also declared that northern refugee Catholics are reportedly planning to send "tens of thousands" of persons into Saigon within two or three days to stage anti-Buddhist demonstrations and to attack Buddhist pagodas and newspapers. Khang indicated that security forces now in the capital are inadequate to cope with such large numbers. Khang's information probably derives from low-level sources but the Catholics have shown in the past a capability to introduce such numbers into Saigon

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for demonstrations. Despite earlier Catholic statements criticizing the government but urging calm, there now are some indications of growing Catholic concern over the Buddhist campaign, including an anti-Communist demonstration near Saigon by northern Catholic youths last weekend.

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IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. After several weeks of only muted comment on the subject of a negotiated settlement in Vietnam, Hanoi has reaffirmed its opposition to any peaceful settlement except on its own "four point" peace terms in a lengthy editorial in Hoc Tap. The occasion for the restatement of North Vietnamese views on negotiations was the first anniversary of the original pronouncement of its "four point" peace proposal. According to the editorial in the party theoretical journal, Hanoi's position on negotiations has not budged an inch in the intervening year. The US must accept the four points which were printed in full and without change and must "prove it by actual deeds"--a formulation used most recently by President Ho Chi Minh in his January letter to heads of governments.

2. The editorial emphasized that the four points constitute a package and must be accepted "as a single entity." North Vietnam is not interested, according to the article, in discussing just one, or two, or three of the points. Until the US agrees to all of them, there will be no discussions. Point three--which calls for settlement of South Vietnamese affairs without foreign interference and in accordance with the program of the Liberation Front--was singled out for special attention. Cessation of hostilities, for example, was, according to the editorial, a "question which comes fully under the competence of the South Vietnamese people and their Liberation Front."

3. Hanoi probably serves two purposes by such a strong restatement of its opposition to negotiations at this time. The article will certainly help to reassure the Chinese that Hanoi remains firmly opposed to a peaceful settlement now. The Vietnamese have made a concerted effort in recent days to assuage Chinese irritation over DRV attendance at the Soviet Party Congress and to assure them that it has not affected Sino-Vietnamese cooperation. They have published a series of laudatory articles on Chinese accomplishments and continue to characterize Chinese-Vietnamese relations as very close

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and friendly. The Hoc Tap editorial endorsing continued opposition to negotiations should also please Peking. The stress on a significant role for the Liberation Front in any political settlement will also be reassuring to the Communists in the South and may be designed to shore up any flagging elan in that quarter.

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